

# Regional AGENDA

## METROPOLITAN KING COUNTY COUNCIL

May-June 2001

### Council Takes Regional Approach to Transportation, Energy Issues



*The King and Snohomish County Councils recently held a joint meeting to discuss regional transportation issues.*

Demonstrating a clear commitment to using a regional mindset when tackling regional issues, the Metropolitan King County Council held joint meetings

with the Pierce and Snohomish County Councils in March and May respectively.

Both occasions were designed as opportunities to begin planning regional solutions to emergent economic, environmental, and transportation issues.

In March, Councilmembers met with Pierce County officials in Federal Way to discuss energy, earthquake and economic issues. Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer invited State Economist Dr. Chang Mook Sohn to discuss Washington State's economy. Sohn

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### Metro Transit: Balancing Service Improvements with Fare Rates

This June, the Metropolitan King County Council completed one of the largest sets of transit service changes seen since the adoption of the current 6-year transit plan. Performing a delicate balancing act between limited resources and service demands, the Transportation Committee and then the full Council adopted September 2001 service

improvements that puts the agency well on the road to restoring service lost after the repeal of the state motor-vehicle excise tax.



*More information inside on transit fare increases*

*Continued on page 2*

Metropolitan King County Council • Room 1200 King County Courthouse • 516 Third Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104-3272

District 1	Maggi Fimia	296-1001	District 6	Rob McKenna	296-1006	District 11	Jane Hague	296-1011
District 2	Cynthia Sullivan	296-1002	District 7	Pete von Reichbauer	296-1007	District 12	David Irons	296-1012
District 3	Louise Miller	296-1003	District 8	Greg Nickels	296-1008	District 13	Les Thomas	296-1013
District 4	Larry Phillips	296-1004	District 9	Kent Pullen	296-1009	General Phone		296-1000
District 5	Dwight Pelz	296-1005	District 10	Larry Gossett	296-1010	TTY / TDD		296-1024

# Metro Transit: Balancing Service Improvements with Fare Rates

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Many of the changes focus on transit service improvements on suburban routes. The improvements will add more than 77,000 hours of bus service throughout King County in September, with a total increase of 124,000 service hours by February 2002. The changes include increasing service to east King County, restoring routes canceled in 2000 due to budget cuts, and better integrating suburban routes with Sound Transit service.

“This package is for the regular rider and those who have said they would use public transportation if they had access to the bus,” said Transportation Committee Chair Maggi Fimia. “It increases service while providing needed routes to the growing suburban corridors.”

There was concern that due to the restrictions of Initiative 695, the agency’s financial commitments were not well balanced with fare rates. This May, the Metropolitan King County Council adopted a solution – a modest, and well thought out fare increase. The measure is designed to increase both the quantity *and quality* of transit service.

The fare package increases regular peak rider fares and off peak fares by 25 cents. Senior/disabled fixed route fares are increased by 25 cents to 50 cents during peak hours only. The council will continue to offer discounted tickets to non-profits and will expand the program by offering up to a million dollars worth of tickets at 20-percent of regular fare prices. The Council maintained a commitment to increase ridership by

reducing youth fares from 75 cents to 50 cents.

“Lowering youth fares sends a very positive, pro-transit message to youth riders. Bus riders are not second class citizens. Our transit riders deserve to have a clean, dry and pleasant waiting area and bus ride” said Fimia.

Councilmember Greg Nickels registered disappointment at the Council’s decision to raise peak hour senior fares by 25 cents. “Barely half a million dollars will be guided into the system by this fare increase. That’s less than one half of one percent of the agency’s budget. On the other hand, doubling the fare seniors pay to become mobile is patently unfair,” said Nickels.

Councilmember Rob McKenna, Budget Committee chair and former Transportation chair, called the fare increase compromise a must-do for the County. “With this fare adjustment, the council has ensured that long-awaited bus service investments will take place on the Eastside and elsewhere this year, as promised. The Council’s top transportation priority continues to be putting as much new service on the streets as possible.”

In addition to service restoration, the fare increase will create a “Transit Good Neighbor” program providing more facilities, like benches, shelters, and cleaner stops and creates an all day pass valid any day, not just Sunday. The fare increase becomes effective July 1, 2001. The newly adopted service adjustments are scheduled to begin September first.

*“With this fare increase, the council has ensured that long-awaited bus service investments will take place...”*  
-Councilmember Rob McKenna

# King County Well Prepared for Nisqually Quake

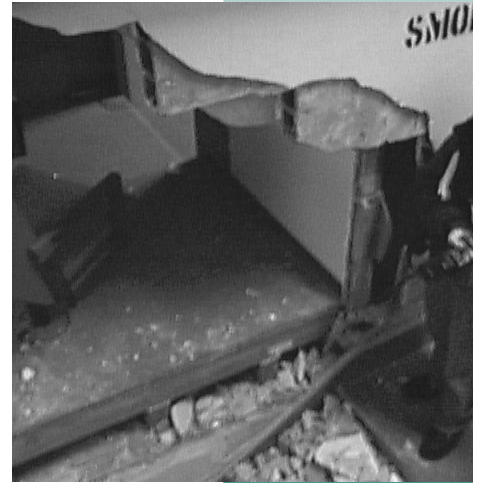
When the ground finally stopped shaking February 28, King County officials quickly began assessing the damage caused by the temblor. Initial estimates put the bill at more than \$173 million.

King County was well prepared. Most emergency systems were back in operation within minutes. Working in tandem with the Council and Executive Ron Sims, the Department of Development and Environmental Services started identifying areas of need and making emergency repairs to crucial facilities.

One such facility was the King County International Airport. The field's long runway suffered extensive damage, virtually halting takeoffs and landings. Crews worked quickly to repair cracks caused by the quake, restoring the runway to full operation by March 15. Another facility visibly shaken was the 87-year-old King County Courthouse. Though the cosmetic damage was extensive, County and independent engineers determined the facility is structurally safe. Crews worked to clean and reopen the building in just 4 days. Other cosmetic repairs continue.

The Council played a dual role in the days following the Nisqually Quake. Councilmembers worked with staff and the public providing assurance that County facilities were safe to reoccupy. The Council also worked legislatively to provide the dollars and authority for emergency repairs. The Council waived competitive bidding requirements to accelerate the schedule to seismically retrofit the Courthouse.

Budget and Fiscal Management Committee chair Rob McKenna said other ways to speed up the retrofit, such as the temporary relocation of courtrooms outside of the courthouse and reducing traffic inside the building by promoting flexible work schedules, must be explored. "We were lucky," McKenna said. "We've had our warning. We need to get this done as quickly as possible because I'm not willing to take a chance on us being this lucky again."



*The 87-year-old Courthouse suffered extensive cosmetic damage, but was found to be structurally safe.*

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## Council's Annual Reorganization Complete; Few Changes

The annual reorganization of the Metropolitan King County Council was completed in March of this year and mostly minor changes were adopted. Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer remains the chair of the Council and the Committee-of-the-Whole while Louise Miller remains vice chair. The major change is in the Budget and Fiscal Management committee. The sub-committees are eliminated and the committee has two vice chairs; vice chair Jane Hague will oversee budget development and analysis and vice chair Larry Phillips will oversee capital budget issues.

Other standing committee changes: Councilmember Maggi Fimia is the new chair of the Transportation Committee and Les Thomas serves as vice chair. Thomas has become chair of the Regional Transit Committee with Fimia moving to vice chair. Councilmember Jane Hague is the new vice chair of the Growth Management and Unincorporated Areas Committee.

For more information on the changes and a complete list of committee chairs and vice chairs, membership, meeting times and location visit the Council web site at [www.metrokc.gov/mkcc](http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc).

# Council Acts to Preserve King County's Environmental Legacy

The Metropolitan King County Council continues its work in adopting responsible and reasoned environmental policy. Evidence of the Council's actions include the

Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative, the Rock Creek Valley Vision, and the May Creek Basin Action Plan.

## Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative

The Council's commitment to preserving open spaces remains clear as evidenced by the unanimous endorsement given to the Snoqualmie

Preservation Initiative. The Initiative may eventually protect up to 9,000 acres of King County forestland.

The Initiative is the culmination of more than a decade of debate over land-use issues in the area bringing together King County, private business, non-profit groups and the recently recognized Snoqualmie tribe. Larry Phillips, chair of County Council's Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee, said the measure "shows that public, private, and non-profit groups can come together and produce a measure that not only provides needed housing, but also permanently preserves rural landscapes."

The Snoqualmie Preservation Initiative will:

- Preserve the Snoqualmie Falls Viewshed.
- Maintain long-term forestry in the Snoqualmie Basin and preserve the Raging River Basin.
- Enhance the King County Trail Network.
- Expand affordable housing at locations where infrastructure already exists.

Now that the Council has approved the Initiative, negotiations to implement the proposal are underway.

## Rock Creek Valley Vision

The Rock Creek Valley contains some of the best salmon habitat in the region. It also provides sixty percent of the city of Kent's drinking water. The 30-square mile area southeast of Maple Valley lies between the Cedar and Green rivers. The residents of the community recognized the need for a long-range plan to guide development while preserving this resource. That plan turned into the Rock Creek Valley Vision, a plan unanimously approved by the Council this March.

The Vision will achieve its goals through voluntary preservation strategies such as transfer of development credits, conservation easements and acquisition of lands by combining local, state and federal funding.

Natural Resources Committee member David Irons praised the organizations that crafted the vision, saying it wouldn't have happened without their help. "This has very broad support in the Valley because the County was willing to let the community take the lead in preserving the place they call home."

The Rock Creek Valley Vision will:

- Protect and enhance water, fish and wildlife resource.
- Maintain forest cover for water and wildlife protection, recreation and commercial forest opportunities.
- Establish a working alliance between King County and private groups in the Valley to implement the vision.

"Protecting one of the few remaining unspoiled stretches of land in King County is in everyone's interest," said Councilmember Larry Phillips. "Citizens, government leaders and private landowners will work together to preserve the spectacular nature of the Rock Creek Valley."

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*The protection of our County's remaining open areas is a goal that Larry Phillips, chair of the Council's Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space Committee, is working toward.*



## Council Fills 13th District Vacancy with Former State House Representative

The Metropolitan King County Council's newest member is former Washington State Representative Les Thomas (R). Thomas represents the 13<sup>th</sup> Council District encompassing portions of Algona, Auburn, Kent, Normandy Park, Pacific and SeaTac.

Joined by his son during the swearing in ceremony, Thomas pledged to "work collaboratively and cooperatively with members to help arrive at regional solutions to the many issues facing our citizens."

Thomas joins the Council after serving two terms in the State House of Representatives where he was chair of the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee. Serving on the Council, Thomas will chair the Regional Transit Committee.

"Our region's industrial strength, economic health and personal productivity depends on sound transportation policy," said Thomas. "I will serve as a strong voice for policies to make our commute times shorter, our policies more effective and dedicate our dollars toward smart solutions that will work now and in the future."

Thomas was sworn in on March 26 to finish the remainder of the term left vacant by the resignation of Councilmember Chris Vance. After serving on the King County Council for seven years, Vance resigned his seat in March to accept the position of chair of the Washington State Republican Party.



*The Council's newest member, Les Thomas, is sworn in by King County Superior Court Judge Ann Schindler.*

## Council Acts to Preserve King County's Environmental Legacy

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### May Creek Basin

The May Creek Basin Action Plan is another action adopted unanimously by the Council. It identifies local water surface problems, including flooding, declining water quality and habitat, and provides recommendations for meeting those concerns. This plan was developed by the County in partnership with stakeholders, the cities of Renton and Newcastle, and a nine-member Citizen Advisory Committee.

"We have struggled to find ways to manage additional runoff pouring into the basin, while preserving and enhancing valuable spawning grounds in May Creek," said Phillips. "The flooding is an example of unmanaged growth coming back to bite the people."

Among the 18 recommendations that have come out of discussions between the County and stakeholders are:

- The establishment of a monitoring program for the basin, which is located on a floodplain.
- Flood protection of homes and technical assistance in the area.
- Erosion control where May Creek and other tributary streams meet.

"This is an issue the residents of unincorporated King County, Renton and now Newcastle have been wrestling with for three decades," said Councilmember Irons. "Listening to those people has meant crafting a series of projects that will address their problems."

# Council Takes Regional Approach To Transportation, Energy issues

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told councilmembers that although the state economy remains strong on most fronts, he predicted continued energy price spikes through the summer of 2002.

For the May 21<sup>st</sup> Committee-of-the-Whole meeting, Councilmembers traveled to Everett to meet with the Snohomish County Council and Washington State Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald.

Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer called the meeting a prime opportunity to discuss regional concerns and regional solutions. "It is our region asking the Legislature to return more tax dollars than any other in Washington State – and for good reason; this region creates the most dollars, the most jobs and, consequently, the most traffic congestion in Washington State. As go our roadways, so goes the health of our region's economy," said Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer.

"Stabilizing energy costs, reducing traffic congestion, preparing for emergencies like earthquakes and drought, each of these requires committed regional leadership and cooperation if we are to serve our citizens

well. King County is making sure we work together efficiently and effectively," said Councilmember Larry Phillips.

"The complex issues we are facing—such as transportation planning, growth management, and rising energy costs—cross jurisdictional lines and require regional solutions," said Councilmember Jane Hague. "Meeting with

other regional leaders on their home turf makes our King County government more accessible and accountable in finding workable plans for the greater Puget Sound area."

Councilmember Louise Miller pointed out that regional cooperation has already yielded several successful programs including FarmLink and Puget Sound Fresh.

"The farmland preservation effort FarmLink is one clear example of the

benefits of joint county cooperation. Working with Snohomish County through FarmLink, we are connecting retiring farmers with future farmers interested in taking over agricultural-zoned lands to maintain or build economically viable farms. This results in extraordinary environmental and economic benefits for all of our citizens," said Miller.

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*"Stabilizing energy costs, reducing traffic congestion, preparing for emergencies like earthquakes and drought. Each of these requires committed regional leadership and cooperation if we are to serve our citizens well. King County is making sure we work together efficiently and effectively."*  
*--Councilmember Larry Phillips.*

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# Council Approves Arts Initiative Projects - Grants Offer Access to the Arts

Funding for the arts is alive and well in King County. The Metropolitan King County Council unanimously adopted two measures in late April awarding more than two and a half million dollars to 18 arts projects. The effort is aimed at increasing public access to the arts and enhancing the experience.

“Art unseen is art wasted. Our action today ensures enhanced facilities, education and the viewing of certain works otherwise unavailable,” said Nickels. “This region has much to offer in the ways of paintings, sculptures and theater. With these grants, we will increase access to the arts, and enhance the public viewing experience.”

Twelve of the projects are part of the Community Arts Initiative, which was created to support arts programming in unincorporated King County and in jurisdictions without a local arts commission. The combined grants of 40-thousand dollars will fund over 40 events in communities throughout King County.

“This summer, our streets and parks will be packed with people taking in weekend arts festivals around King County,” said Councilmember Larry Phillips. “The region’s arts community provides fun and entertainment, while contributing to the local economy and our quality of life. Our action today simply enhances these opportunities.”

The Council also approved two opportunity grants totaling \$17,500. A portion of the money was used to purchase reduced-price tickets for 800 suburban King County students to attend a performance of Peter Brook’s adaptation of the Tragedy of Hamlet.

Four projects will receive a total of 2.5 million dollars as part of King County’s Major Regional Cultural Facilities

Initiative. The Council approved funding for new construction of the Bellevue Art Museum, renovation of the Seattle Opera House, a major facility expansion at the Museum of Flight and, new construction at the Museum of History and Industry.

“Providing such diverse activities as Shakespeare and salsa dancing to residents of East King County is a benefit to the citizens as well as to the artists,” said Councilmember David Irons. “These programs offer all of us the opportunity to expand our knowledge and appreciation of the rich cultural resources this region has to offer.”

“King County is a national leader in arts funding and bringing performing and visual arts to every corner of our diverse county and population,” said Councilmember Louise Miller.



*Councilmembers Larry Phillips (back lt), Louise Miller (front lt) and Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer (back rt) honor Marilyn Brockman (ctr), King County Public Arts Commissioner from 1996 to 2000. Jim Kelly (rt), Cultural Resources Manager was also in attendance.*

# Council Honors Outstanding High School Graduates

The Metropolitan King County Council honored over 200 top graduating high school seniors from around the county at the 16th Annual Student Scholar Celebration on Wednesday evening, May 23rd at the Museum of Flight.

All high school seniors in King County from both public and private high schools, carrying a 4.0 cumulative grade point average, or those in the top one percent of their graduating class were invited to the event and given an honorary certificate of accomplishment. Students from all thirteen County Council districts were represented at the event, and most were accompanied by their parents.

“These young people represent the future of our community,” said Council Chair Pete von Reichbauer. “It is important to recognize and honor the tremendous accomplishments achieved by these students during their high school careers.”



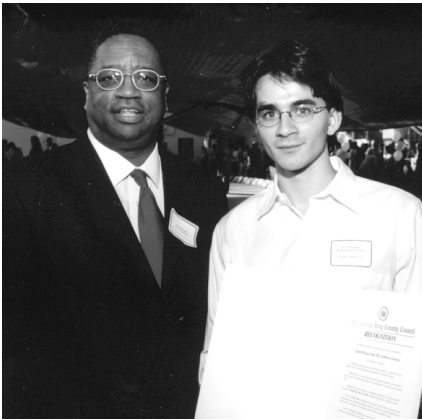
*Aletheia Lee from Seattle Christian High School, accompanied by her parents, was congratulated by Councilmember Kent Pullen.*



*Jason Gee from King's High School was congratulated by Councilmember Cynthia Sullivan.*



*John Curley of KING 5 Television's Evening Magazine, delivered an inspirational speech to this year's graduating class of 2001.*



*Jacob Brogan from the Northwest School was congratulated by Councilmember Larry Gossett .*

The information in this newsletter is available in alternate format upon request. Alternate format includes braille, large print, and/or audio. For more information, please call 296-0360, or TDD/TTY at 296-1024.

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**AGENDA**  
*Exhibits*